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Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2571

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PCAT, SHUM, MPOL, KS, US
SUBJ: WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FOR ROK NATIONAL POLICE AND FOR GUARD FORCES FOR ROK PRIVATE CORPORATIONS AND PUBLIC INSTALLATIONS

SUMMARY: ROK NATIONAL POLICE IS CLEARING HOUSE FOR ALL WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION PURCHASES IN KOREA, EXCEPT FOR THOSE FOR THE MILITARY. USG FAILURE TO AUTHORIZE SALES OF AMMUNITION AND WEAPONS TO ROK POLICE WILL EVENTUALLY CAUSE DETERIORATION IN POLICE EFFECTIVENESS AND WILL LEAVE MANY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INSTALLATIONS WHICH ARE TARGETS FOR NORTH KOREAN ATTACK IN EVENT OF WAR POORLY GUARDED. ROK POLICE ARE MAINLY EQUIPPED WITH US STANDARD EQUIPMENT, AS IS ROK MILITARY. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF WAS VISITED MARCH 28 BY ROK NATIONAL POLICE CAPTAIN PAK BONG-SUN, CHIEF OF THE EQUIPMENT SECTION OF NATIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS. CAPTAIN PAK LEFT A LIST OF RECENT ROK POLICE ORDERS FOR PURCHASE OF GUNS AND AMMUNITION WHICH HAVE BEEN TURNED DOWN ALONG WITH EXPALANATION OF PURPOSES TO WHICH EACH TYPE OF EQUIPMENT WOULD BE PUT. DETAILS ARE INCLUDED IN PARAS 2-4. CAPTAIN PAK EXPLAINED THAT ROK NATIONAL POLICE AND ROK MILITARY ARE THE ONLY TWO SOURCES IN KOREA FOR WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION. ALL PRIVATE CORPORATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS HAVE TO ORDER THEIR WEAPONS THROUGH ONE OF THESE TWO SOURCES. HE SAID THAT ABOUT HALF OF
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THE POLICE ORDERS FOR WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FROM THE US WERE FOR GUARDS EMPLOYED BY PRIVATE CORPORATIONS TO PROTECT FACTORIES, AIR FIELDS, AND SENSITIVE NON-MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.

2. IN JUNE OR JULY OF 1977 THE KOREAN NATIONAL POLICE ORDERED THROUGH THE OFFICE OF SUPPLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA (OSROK) 300,000 ROUNDS OF .38 CALIBER CARTRIDGES

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TO BE USED FOR TARGET PRACTICE BY KNP OFFICERS (OSROK CONTRACT NO KFX-KOS-771232-NY-P1). THE KNP ANNUALLY ORDERS BETWEEN 300,000 AND 500,000 ROUNDS OF THIS AMMUNITION FROM THE US FOR TRAINING. CAPTAIN PAK SAID THAT A DELAY IN ACQUIRING THE AMMUNITION MAY CAUSE AN INTERRUPTION IN THE TRAINING PROGRAM.

3. ANOTHER ORDER FOR 137 .38 CALIBER HANDGUNS FOR TWO NEWLY ESTABLISHED POLICE STATIONS (OSROK CONTRACT NO KFX-KOS-771740-NY-PI) WAS PLACED IN JUNE OR JULY, 1977. THE SAME ORDER INCLUDED 120 FRAGMENTATION GRENADE LAUNCHERS TO REPLACE WORN OUT EQUIPMENT FOR THE ROK COMBAT POLICE, A PARA-MILITARY FORCE WHICH ENGAGES IN COUNTER-INFILTRATION ACTIVITY AND OTHER SEMI-MILITARY FUNCTIONS (THE COMBAT POLICE WERE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR PATROLLING TOK-DO -- TAKESHIMA -- DURING THE PERIOD WHEN THE CONFLICTING JAPANESE AND ROK CLAIMS TO THIS ISLAND WERE BEING PRESSED).

4. IN THE LATTER PART OF 1977, THE KNP ORDERD 75 .38 CALIBER HANDGUNS, 19,000 ROUNDS OF .38 CALIBER AMMUNITION AND 266 CARBINES FOR CIVILIAN SECURITY GUARDS AT KIMPO AIRPORT, LOREA SECURITY COMPANY AND 65 OTHER "IMPORTANT FACILITIES AND NATIONAL PROPERTIES" (OSROK CONTRACTS KFX-KOS-771252-NY-PI AND KFX-KOS-772006-NY-PI). ACCORDING TO CAPT PAK, THE SECURITY GUARDS ARE CURRENTLY STANDING CONFIDENTIAL

GUARD UNARMED BECAUSE THIS ORDER HAS NOT BEEN APPROVED. ANOTHER ORDER FOR 124 CARBINES FOR SECURITY GUARDS PROTECTING FACILITIES OF THE KOREAN BROADCASTING CORP HAS ALSO BEEN REJECTED, ACCORDING TO THE KNP, AND THE SECURITY GUARDS FOR THESE FACILITIES ARE STANDING GUARD UNARMED.

5. OUR OWN INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES ARE THAT NORTH KOREA PROBABLY WOULD ATTEMPT TO INSERT AS MANY AS 50,000 UNCONVENTIONAL FORCES TROOPS BEHIND ROK LINES IN THE EVENT OF AN ATTACK ON SOUTH KOREA. PRIME MISSIONS FOR THESE FORCES WOULD BE TO ATTACK OSAN AIR BASE, KIMPO, THE BROADCAST STATIONS AND FACILITIES AND OTHER CRITICAL INSTALLATIONS WITH SATCHEL CHARGES. MOST OF THESE FACILITIES ARE GUARDED BY THE CIVILIAN GUARDS FOR WHOM THE KNP ORDERS WEAPONS. ADDITIONALLY, THE JOB OF PROTECTING THE COASTLINE AGAINST INFILTRATORS WOULD GO, INTER ALIA, TO THE COMBAT POLICE. THE POLICE FORCE WOULD ALSO HAVE, AS IT DOES NOW, THE JOB OF TRYING TO ROUND UP INFILTRATORS IN THE MOUNTAINS AND REMOTE AREAS.

6. AS WE HAVE INDICATED IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, WE DO

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NOT HAVE ANY RECORD OF POLICE FORCES IN THE ROK UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT USING LETHAL WEAPONS FOR RIOT CONTROL OR TO DEPRIVE CITIZENS OF THEIR POLITICAL RIGHTS. WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE POLICE HAVE USED US ORIGIN EQUIPMENT (E.G., TEAR GAS) TO DENY POLITICAL RIGHTS, WE HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD IN ADVOCATING DENIAL OF THAT EQUIPMENT TO THE OFFENDING ORGANIZATION. BECAUSE OF THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVED IN DENYING WEAPONS TO THE KNP, HOWEVER, WE ARE REPORTING ON THIS SUBJECT MORE FULLY THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE.

7. ACCORDING TO THE KNP THE AFOREMENTIONED APPLICATIONS FOR AMMUNITION AND WEAPONS HAVE BEEN REJECTED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 22 USC SECTION 123.05A AS BEING INCONSISTANT WITH US FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS. OSROK APPARANTELY INTENDS TO RESUBMIT THE APPLICATION. MEANWHILE THE KNP HAS ASKED THE EMBASSY FOR AN EXPLANATION OF THE REASONS FOR THE DENIAL OF THE APPLICATION AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT ACTIONS THE KNP SHOULD TAKE IN RESUBMITTING ITS APPLICATION IN ORDER TO INSURE A FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM THE DEPARTMENT.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOUL APPRECIATE CONFIRMATION THAT THE AFOREMENTIONED APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN DENIED AND INFORMATION UPON WHICH TO RESPOND TO THE LATTER REQUEST FROM THE KNP IN PARA 7 ABOVE.

9. ADDITIONALLY, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO TAKE INTO CONSIDEATION INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE SHOULD THE KNP APPLICATION FOR THIS EQUIPMENT BE RESUBMITTED.
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